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General Comment

[Edited by Gilbert Campbell Scoggin, of the University of Missouri.]

In the *Yale Review* for October appears an article on "The Case of Latin" by Dr. A. G. Keller, a professor of the science of society. Professor Keller takes issue with most of the arguments usually offered in favor of Latin. Insisting that the ordinary student learns really very little of the language, he doubts whether the aesthetic value thus derived can be great or worth the cost, although it is usually the aesthetic value that is in the minds of those who express fear that Latin is endangered. He also doubts that much training in the use of good English comes from the study of Latin grammar. He rightly rates Greek far above Latin from the aesthetic point of view: "It is a personal conviction, but I do not doubt that many would agree with it, that most of the aesthetic value peculiar to the classics in the original disappeared when Greek declined; I think the case of Greek was decided with too little realization of the truth inhering in that conviction." He is of the opinion that, with a few exceptions, such as Horace and Catullus, the Latin authors can be more successfully translated than can the Greek. Throughout he evinces a low estimate of Latin literature and insists that it would be better for Greek alone to be maintained rather than Latin alone. Yet, if Greek is to go, Latin wholly apart from its aesthetic side must be maintained because of its value as discipline. The teaching of Latin has been systematized, and Latin has better elementary teachers than do the modern languages. Latin should be kept until a satisfactory substitute is offered. In the rôle of discipline Latin is quite worth the cost.

In the same number of the *Yale Review*, Professor Thomas Dwight Goodell writes on "Greek in the New University." Believing as he does that the old structure of classical education is falling, he still derives some hope from the marked indications of idealism which frequently appear in our mixed population. Amid all the eager scramble for wealth, there is seen on the part of those who have quickly acquired wealth the desire to endow museums, to found libraries, to make collections of Greek art, books, painting, and the like. In the end all men turn toward those things which satisfy the spirit. If I understand his theory aright, Professor Goodell thinks that a baneful influence was exerted on classical studies at an earlier period by comparative philology and even by classical archaeology; but that since these studies now are assuming more independent positions as special fields to be mastered by a few, classical studies have somewhat recovered. I must confess that my own view has long been the opposite of this. I think that the good old study of humanity

has been allowed gradually to suffer disintegration with subsequent loss to all concerned. Many things formerly included in classical study have now either proclaimed their independence or have been annexed by some aggressive neighbor. Thus in our colleges we have lost ancient history; and even such an important field as Greek philosophy must be sought outside the classical group. No wonder is it that some outsiders regard the classics as of no value. These critics have in mind only the dry husk of language, which is about the only thing now left us uncontested, and they associate all the vital content with what to them seem to be more living subjects. Professor Goodell rightly insists that in the college we should try to instil a love for letters, and that we should leave to the graduate school the making of teachers and philologists. He believes that the relations between Greek and Latin are now too dependent, and that the Hellenists should maintain their own position separate: "It is Greek art and letters that constitute the foundation and the crown of classical study for liberal culture. Greek teachers must give to it all their powers in college." He thinks that Greek will be learned by few as always, but will be better learned, and that, too, by the leading minds.

On October 6 Mr. Ernest Martin Hopkins was installed as eleventh president of Dartmouth College. In his inaugural address President Hopkins outlined his conception of the purpose of a college together with his views as to how the proper end might be attained. The sane views which he expressed will for the most part meet the unqualified approval of the humanists. In general, he insists that in the college there should be fewer subjects and these should be better taught. He sounds a warning against the present widespread demand for subjects strictly utilitarian. He wisely draws the distinction between a college and a technical school, at the same time pointing out the great debt that the college owes to the latter. We need schools of both types; the modern world demands superior technical training, while the old cultural college has always proved its usefulness in our national history. The vital connection of the present with the past is emphasized: "It is not likely to be, at any time, that without loss to itself, the world can close its mind to the influence of the past. The intuitions for the beautiful and the understanding for the logical which have come down to us from civilizations which have risen and lived their allotted lives are foundations for the appreciation of philosophy, art, and literature without which the world would lose its breadth and depth." He cites with approval from the *Memorandum on the Limitations of Scientific Education*, issued by Mr. James Bryce and other distinguished English scholars, the statement that in education "we believe that the study of Greece and Rome must always have a large part, because our whole civilization is rooted in the history of these peoples, and without knowledge of them cannot be properly understood." Like George Grote, he champions the classics, not through hostility to science—every humanist craves knowledge from all sources—but

because in the present materialistic age the humanities will be attacked, while science will always be able to take care of itself. The point is well made that the caprice of the student in the matter of courses to be taken should be restrained and guided "by what past experience has shown to be best for the ultimate accomplishment of those ends for which the college exists as a means. But the requirements cannot be abolished even if he remains unconvinced, for the college is more responsible for his ultimate satisfaction than for his immediate contentment." Other points stressed by President Hopkins are the duties of the graduate to the state, the value of discipline, the dangers of excessive individualism, and the building of character.

It is a striking paradox that so many eminently successful men should have found fault with their teachers and their early studies. Petrarch, urged to the study of law by his father, afterward maintained that the time spent on his legal studies at Montpellier, and later at Bologna, was wholly lost. Yet it is hard to remove a lurking suspicion that some legal seeds must have yielded a rich harvest in the mind of a man who felt such admiration for Cicero, the greatest of the lawyers of ancient Rome. Charles Darwin studied for seven years at Shrewsbury under one of the greatest of schoolmasters, Dr. Samuel Butler, yet in his autobiography Darwin asserts that "the school as a means of education to me was simply a blank." But we begin to doubt this sweeping statement when immediately afterward we are told that much attention was given to committing lessons to memory and that in this he could display considerable facility. Ability to learn by heart in a few minutes forty or fifty lines of Virgil or Homer, a task admittedly disagreeable to him, does not sound like failure to us. When he tells us further that he came to admire Horace, and that he left the school with strong and diversified tastes, and that he went up to Cambridge possessing a keen pleasure in understanding anything that was difficult and complex, we are truly amazed, and wonder what other purpose a school should serve. It was only after long years of restricted scientific study that his powers of aesthetic enjoyment were allowed to atrophy, and then he was wise enough to regret the loss of his old relish for poetry and music. His early humanistic training could not stifle his love for natural science; but when given free rein, science, mind you, did throttle his aesthetic powers, and that, too, to his lasting sorrow. The distinguished French naturalist, M. Fabre, has sprinkled among his delightful studies of insect life some very interesting comments on his early education. Unlike many others, he now speaks gratefully of those who gave him a thorough drubbing in Greek and Latin. He admits that he fumed against the system at the time, but adds that today he is wiser through age and experience. His one regret now is that his literary studies were not more prolonged. He even confesses that later in life he has often returned to the old books against which his youthful impatience had fretted. John Stuart Mill, while studying Latin under his father, was set to

teaching his younger sister in the same subject. It was a very disagreeable task at the time, yet with uncommon generosity he admits that from this discipline he derived incalculable benefit from the necessity of learning more thoroughly and of retaining more lastingly. The thorough drilling that Mill received from his father might well have made even his vigorous intellect shrink, but the result only goes to prove the value of stern discipline in tasks not wholly congenial. Such treatment at the hands of a public schoolmaster might have called forth some protest from Mill. Of recent expressions of dissatisfaction with early masters and schooling, none is more whimsical than that found in the *Autobiography* of Charles Francis Adams. Adams got started wrong by being born in Boston, and things were made worse by his being sent for his early education to the Boston Latin School. A gloomy picture indeed one gets of this ancient school. Mr. Dixwell, the head master of his day, would seem to have been the incarnation of inefficiency—or can it be of stern efficiency which might well not please a strong-willed boy determined to have his own way in his own education? At any rate, proof of Mr. Dixwell's literary tastes and scholarship may be found in a little volume which late in life he issued privately "for friends." This book, entitled *Otia Senectutis*, consists of Greek and Latin renderings of various bits of favorite verse, here brought together at the repeated request of an old pupil! This pupil, who had now become a distinguished scholar and teacher, never lost an opportunity of acknowledging his indebtedness to Mr. Dixwell, who had made his career possible. After Adams had left such a school, there would seem to have been only one greater possible calamity, and, of course, fate brought this upon him, that he should be sent to Harvard College. Here he might have become a Greek scholar, but it fell to his lot to have as his teachers, Professors Cornelius Conway Felton, and Evangelinus Apostolides Sophocles. Now in spite (?) of these teachers, Adams became interested in Greek literature; he read much Greek on the outside and reached the point where he could read a hundred lines of Homer an hour! "A little more and I should have acquired the faculty of reading Greek as a living language," he exclaims; and at this point the reader, recalling that Sophocles was a native Greek, may shrewdly suspect that his teaching may have reflected his own feeling for living Greek. But the methods of instruction in use destroyed all incentive toward learning Greek, says Adams, and "to my lasting and subsequent regret, the half-acquired faculty fell into disuse," presumably after he had got far beyond the reach of that stern pair of taskmasters, Professors Felton and Sophocles. The hostility toward the classics later displayed by Adams when he was a member of the Board of Overseers of Harvard has been mentioned in these columns, as well as his recantation shortly before his death. At the end of a busy and useful life he seems to have realized that much of his own success had come as the result of those classical studies which he had long ago pursued under the humanists.